

Wiesner

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

March 6, 1961

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

Thank you for your good wishes and for the interesting points you have made in your letter of January 24th.

The by-product civilian value of our military program is, of course, of considerable national importance. One can hardly question the impact of military technology on our industrial and economic progress over the past 15 years. The question that you have raised, as I understand it, is not whether this is taking place, but whether a more concerted effort should be undertaken to promote civilian benefits through assignment of such a mission to the military services. I agree with you that it would be a very good idea to make more effective use in the civilian economy of the technical developments made for the military and that ways should be found to do this.

I wonder if whatever group is given the responsibility for doing this shouldn't also try to identify areas in which research might lead to new products for new industries quite independent of any military justification or need. This may be desirable because of the fact that the nature of military requirements is drawing military technology farther and farther away from the civilian area.

At the present time, the patent provisions in military contracts do, under certain circumstances, permit exclusive commercial exploitation by the contractor and thus provide an incentive for civilian application of military-inspired technology. On the other hand, I believe that more could be done to make generally available the unclassified technological data and concepts contained in classified reports of military contractors. Some progress has been made in declassification and publication of DOD-sponsored research and development through the Office of Technical Services in the Department of Commerce. Perhaps a more intensive and systematic attempt to declassify and extract unclassified information from reports could provide substantial additional dividends to our industry. The Atomic Energy Commission has done a particularly good job in this respect.

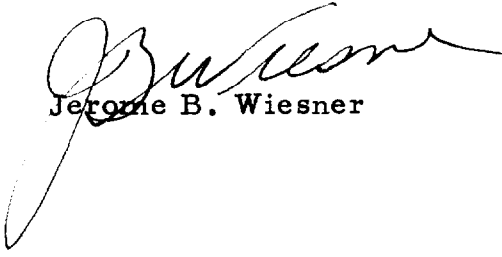
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Dr. Joshua Lederberg

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I would like to have the opportunity of talking about this matter with you the next time you are in Washington, if you can spare the time. I am also making your letter available to Dr. York for his information and possible comment.

Sincerely yours,



Jerome B. Wiesner

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